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ABSTRACT

In education, women are outnumbered by men four to one at the administrative level. This paper presents findings of a study that sought to determine the association between advanced degrees in educational administration and the careers of those holding such degrees. Data were obtained from questionnaires that were mailed to a total of 210 former educational administration graduates who received degrees from a midwestern research university during 1985-90. The sample included 122 graduates at the master's level, 56 at the advanced certificate level, and 32 at the doctoral level. A total of 170 responses were received, an 83 percent response rate. Findings demonstrate an increase in the number of women pursuing administrative careers and greater involvement of women in educational administration preparatory programs. Despite their academic credentials, however, they struggle to achieve administrative positions, particularly those of superintendent, associate/assistant superintendent, and secondary school principal. More so than for men, graduate work in educational administration is essential for the advancement of women in school leadership. It is recommended that universities and other preparatory institutions: (1) design and offer graduate programs that reflect the needs of women and minority leaders; (2) intensify recruitment efforts of women and minorities into such programs; (3) strengthen or establish a mentor system; and (4) provide job enrichment experiences for women. Additionally, women need to develop their own support networks. Two figures are included. (LMI)

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A Comparative Career Profile of 1985-1990 Female and Male Graduates of Educational Administration Programs from a Midwestern Research University

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A Comparative Career Profile of 1985-1990 Female and Male Graduates of Educational Administration Programs from a Midwestern Research University

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the few professions where women have historically dominated in terms of numbers. Yet, they are outnumbered by men four to one at the administrative level. The underrepresentation of women in elementary and secondary educational administration has been well-documented (Edson, 1988: Jones & Montenegro, 1985, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1987, 1990; Schmuck & Wyant, 1981; Whitaker & Lane, 1990). Today, school leadership and administration remains predominantly male. The situation has gotten worse than better. Statistics indicate that between 1928 and 1984, the numbers of women principals steadily dropped from 55 to 18 percent (Montenegro, 1988). Undeniably, women's progress in attaining leadership positions in education has been slow. In addition, it has been tough for women to break through the "glass ceiling," a term which refers to a "transparent barrier" that keeps women from rising above certain levels in organization/corporations (Morrison et al., 1992).

Various explanations have been put forth to account for the lack of female representation in school leadership (Edson, 1981, 1988; Frasher & Frasher, 1979; Gasser, 1975 ; Goerss, 1977; Gross & Trask, 1964; Hemphill, Griffiths, & Frederiksen, 1962; Jones & Montenegro, 1985; Paddock, 1981; Schmuck, 1975; Schmuck & Wyant, 1981) including inadequate preparation for administrative positions because educational administration preparation programs have not sought to recruit women or offer them sufficient financial aid to support their studies in graduate school (Meskin, 1975). However, graduate work leading to an advanced degree in the field of educational administration and supervision has been found to be essential for those who aspire to the principalship (Campbell, Flemming, Newell, & Bennion, 1987; Pitner, 1988). Unfortunately, there is little research on educational administration preparation programs for women and whether or not and how advanced degrees in educational administration have impacted the careers of women aspirants/administrators. Can an advanced degree in educational administration increase the likelihood of women penetrating this male-dominated profession?

This paper reports the results of a study which gathered and compared descriptive information on the men and women who obtained their graduate degrees (Ed.M., Advanced Certificate, doctorate: Ph.D./Ed.D.) in educational administration from one

university between the years 1985-1990. The study sought to determine the association between advanced degrees in educational administration and the careers of these graduates. By examining the careers of this group of male and female graduates of educational administration programs, we have a better understanding of women's careers and how to enable their workforce participation at all organizational levels.

THE RESEARCH

Setting and Methodology

The study took place in one midwestern research university that offers advanced degree programs in educational administration. The subjects consisted of 210 educational administration graduates from 1985-90 with 122 graduates at the master's level (43 males and 79 females), 56 at the advanced certificate level (26 males and 30 females), and 32 at the doctoral level (20 males and 12 females). One hundred seventy of the 210 graduates returned completed usable questionnaires: 101 females and 69 males, representing an 83% return rate. The 170 respondents were representative of the 210 educational administration graduates who were requested to participate in the study. An examination of the non-respondents revealed that they did not have characteristics which made them different from the respondents.

It also is important to note that all the doctorate graduates returned usable questionnaires. The analysis of data pertaining to the doctoral graduates revealed outcomes critical to the advancement of women aspiring for higher level administrative line positions (e.g., superintendents, assistant/associate superintendents, and secondary school principals). The focus on gender comparison was a response to the research literature that argues the need for and importance of such studies.

The research employed a written survey questionnaire requesting information on selected personal characteristics, educational credentials, professional experiences, and career paths of the educational administration graduates prior to and after obtaining their advanced degrees. The questions also generated very rich information, particularly on issues pertaining to mentorship, family concerns, gender discrimination, and graduates' perceptions of their programs. Additionally, the six-year period of time was chosen to best illustrate the career patterns of recent graduates from the educational administration

programs and to minimize variation associated with comparing participants' responses over a wider range of years and contexts.

Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage tabulations) were used in presenting demographic information. To test differences between men and women's responses, chi-square tests of .05 level of significance were applied to the percentage responses.

Theoretical Framework

The study was embedded in and informed by educational research related to women in educational administration. It was based on the literature documenting the underrepresentation of women in public school administration. The different reasons given by researchers as to why women continue to be the marginalized group in school leadership can be ascribed to one of the three explanatory models proposed by Suzanne Estler (1975): "woman's place" model which assumes that the identification of roles and occupations that are defined appropriate for either sex is a consequence of the differential socialization of women and men; "meritocracy" model which maintains that selection for a position is based on ability and qualifications; and "discrimination" model which assumes that women have been systematically excluded from administrative positions despite having qualifications comparable to if not better than men. These theoretical models and other major studies on women school administrators and educational administration programs were applied in interpreting the data. Furthermore, concerns about gender equity in occupational opportunities, including the field of educational leadership, guided the study.

Findings

The results of the study are organized into the following sections: profile information, career path information, and association between degree and subsequent administrative placement.

Profile Information

Of the 170 educational administration graduates who responded to the questionnaire, 101 were women and 69 were men. The breakdown of the sample according to degree programs was 53% at the master's level (90 respondents), 28% at the Advanced Certificate

level (48 respondents), and 19% at the doctoral level (32 respondents). As the degree level got higher, the proportion of women graduates decreased while that of men increased. (See Figure 1 for the distribution.)

Across the three degree programs, female educational administration graduates were slightly older than their male respondents. The mean age of the women was 42.1 years while it was 41.7 years for the men. A substantial number of the women were confronted with dual-role responsibilities to home and career with many of them waiting until their children were grown before starting their programs. Though this group of women claimed to have gotten support from their families at the start and culmination of their programs, the fact is they were already a step behind their male counterparts who were able to pursue their graduate studies in spite of their married status and/or family responsibilities.

There was a striking statistical difference in the racial characteristics of the sample. The vast majority (95%) was white with the remainder (5%) either African-American, Puerto Rican, or Asian. Male and female minority graduates were disproportionately underrepresented across the three programs.

With respect to marital status, a higher proportion of men than women was married (85% vs. 67%), whereas the proportion of women who never married was more than twice than that of men (18% vs. 7%). This can be partially attributed to the greater number of single females who made pursuing a career their main priority. Further, the males had larger families than did the females (2.1 children vs. 1.4 children).

Another noticeable difference was in the annual salaries of the graduates at the advanced certificate and doctoral levels. The gender gap in yearly earnings was apparent at the doctoral level with 75% of the men receiving $60,000 or more compared to 25% of the women. Of the advanced certificate graduates, 47% of the men compared to 11% of the women were receiving annual salaries of $60,000 or more. The disparity in the yearly earnings can be accounted for by the locations where men and women were employed or the type of positions they held.

Overall, the typical educational administration graduate from this midwestern university from 1985-1990 was a white male from a small town or suburb, married with 2 children, reflecting an average salary of $50,000 or more.

Career Path Information

The career patterns of the respondents were traced from their first teaching jobs to the positions they held as of 1991-92. A high proportion (65%) of the 145 educational administration graduates employed in school districts held administrative positions. Similar to previous research findings, a higher proportion of women than men actually held public school administrative staff positions of assistant principal, dean, program director, and supervisor (39% vs. 28%). Furthermore, these women found themselves stuck in such positions. On the other hand, the percentage of men who held public school administrative line positions was higher than that of women (41% vs. 23%; the most pronounced difference was at the superintendency level with no female attaining this position). This is indicative of the inability of the women to break through the "glass ceiling" in spite of their educational credentials and training.

Association of the Advanced Degrees and Subsequent Placement

At the beginning of the respondents' graduate programs, more than half of them were teachers with a higher proportion of men than women (13% vs. 2%) holding line positions. At the completion of their programs, over twice the proportion of men as women (24% vs. 10%) held line positions. Over twice the percentage of women as men (44% vs. 20%) were promoted within the same school district or system following the completion of their program. Family concerns/responsibilities inhibited women's careers (forced choice) and career mobility. Over twice the proportion of men as women (44% vs. 20%) experienced movement from one educational position to another in more than one school district. The typical portrait of an educational administration graduate from 1985-1990 was a white male whose route to administration took him from classroom teaching to an administrative staff position and then to a line position in a district different from the one in which he began.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The proportion of the female educational administration graduates in the study shows an increase in the number of women pursuing administrative careers as well as greater involvement of women in educational administration preparatory programs. Yet, in spite of their educational credentials, they struggle to get into administrative positions, particularly

the line positions of superintendent, associate/assistant superintendent, and secondary school principal. With the numerous barriers that seem to confront women, it is important to identify factors which enable them to be competitive in the field of school administration. According to the survey results, participation in preparatory administrative training through informal in-services or through formal university graduate programs may increase women's chances of achieving their desired positions. The majority of the female respondents acknowledged the importance of obtaining a degree beyond their bachelor's degree to become more "marketable." For instance, there were more women than men with Advanced Certificate degrees when they were first hired as school administrators. In contrast, the data from this research suggest that a bachelor's degree or master's was sufficient for men to obtain their first administrative jobs. More so than for men, graduate work in educational administration is essential in the advancement of women in school leadership.

Findings on the 1985-1990 male and female educational administration graduates correspond to the national picture of male dominated leadership in education. Because of this, the researcher feels that the following recommendations for increasing the number of women in educational administration preparatory programs as well as school leadership positions applies not only to the university referenced in this study but also to other preparatory institutions:

- Design and offer graduate programs that reflect the needs of women leaders, courses that deal with gender-related issues as well as the provision of special programs on career planning and opportunities for minority students to participate in seminars and inservices. A curriculum that is responsive to the concerns of women educators can influence these women and minority students to pursue higher administrative goals and/or aspirations.

- Intensify the recruitment of women and other minorities in educational administration programs. To complement this intent, the availability of faculty from the underrepresented groups is paramount.

- Strengthen or establish a mentor system within the educational administrative preparatory programs. Mentoring can increase women's confidence and assist them to stay focused on their career goals

- Difficult as it is, there is a need to win the "old boys network" support. Additionally, women need to be allies to each other and develop their own network of relationships.

- Prepare women for school leadership by providing them with the following job enrichment experiences designed to increase their skills and competencies: include them in leadership activities, designate them as acting administrators, and assign them to tasks that involved solving pressing problems in schools.

While some of these recommendations have become standard, they remain appropriate, considering the continued plight of women aspirants to higher administrative level positions. There is no one answer as to how to increase the numbers of women school leaders. Obviously, women need all the opportunities available to allow them access to and success in school administration. After all, there is a growing body of literature on women administrators that supports the image of the competent, successful, career-minded female administrator. The question remains: How long will this valuable human resource- women's talent- remain "untapped?"

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Figure 1: Degree Distribution of the 1985-90 Educational Administration Graduates from a Midwestern Research University by Sex

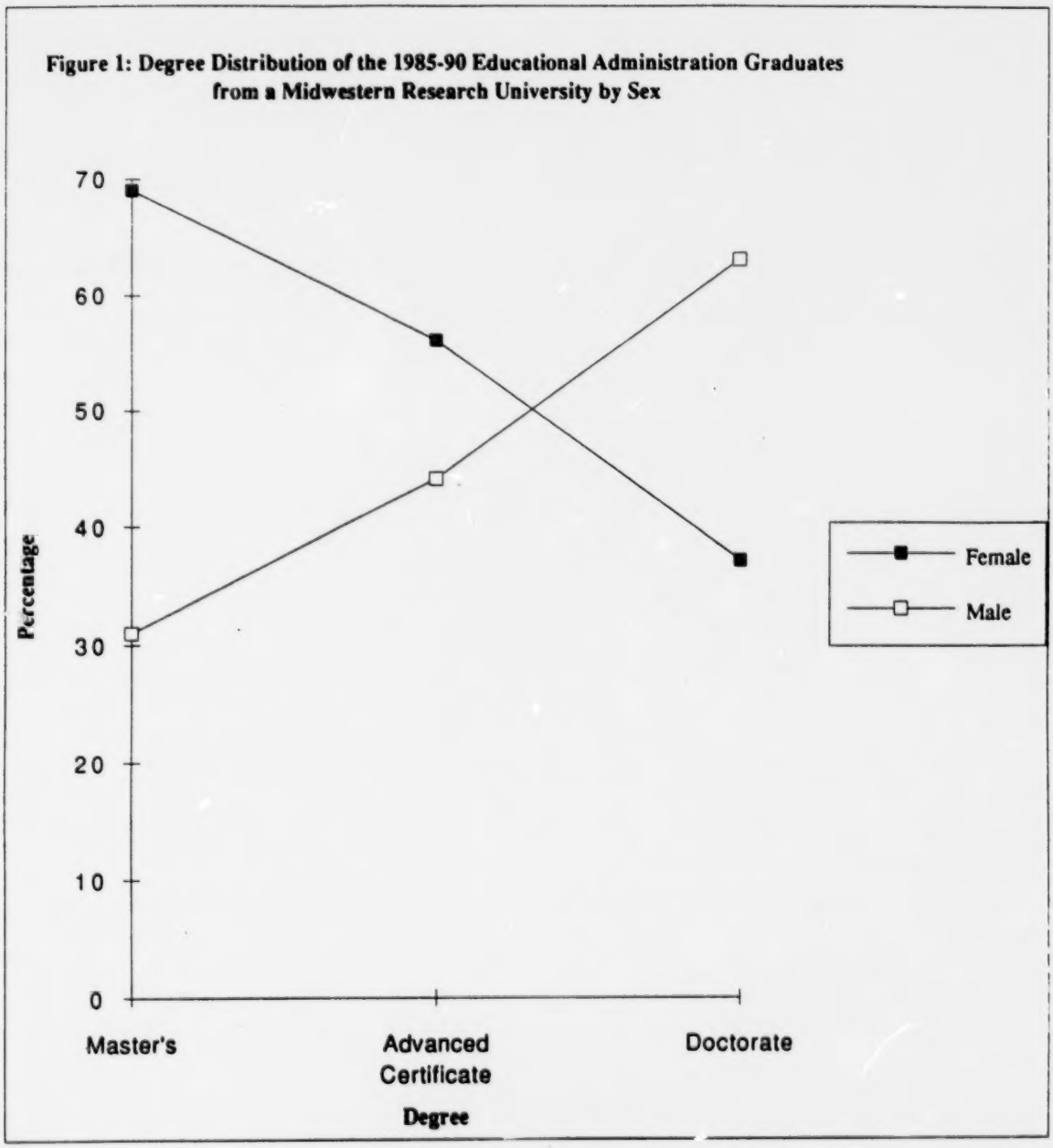
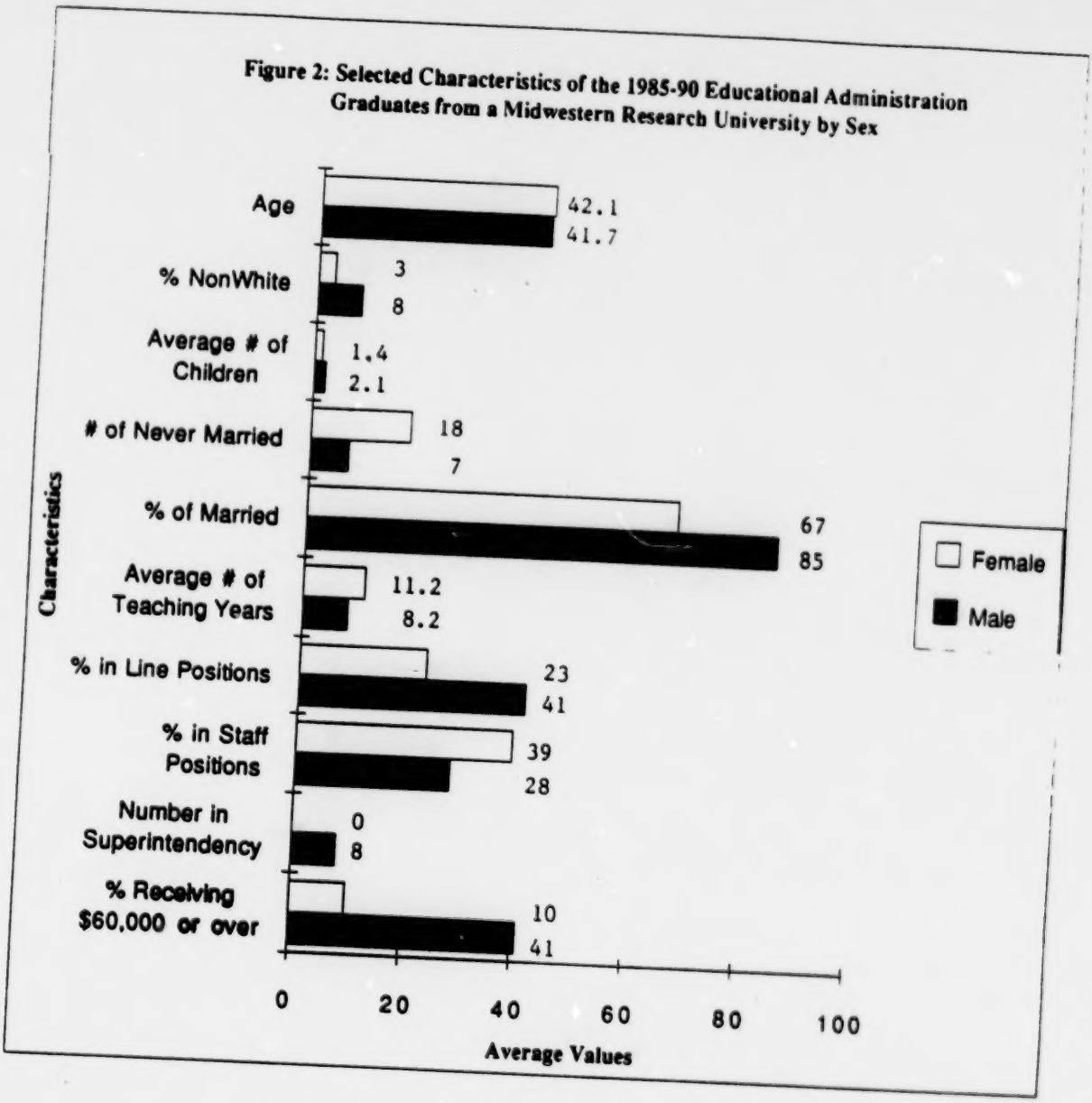


Figure 2: Selected Characteristics of the 1985-90 Educational Administration Graduates from a Midwestern Research University by Sex



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